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ABSTRACT

The National Diffusion Network (NDN) has, since 1974, disseminated information about exemplary elementary and secondary programs, processes, and projects. State facilitators, usually based in the state education agencies, perform coordinating and brokering roles in program development. Programs are validated by the Joint Dissemination and Review Panel, made up of National Institute of Education and Office of Education personnel and are listed in the annual NDN catalog, "Educational Programs That Work." State facilitators use the catalog to plan new programs or to modify existing programs so that they can be used in their states. Locating the state facilitator in an institution of higher learning can provide unique opportunities for professional growth. The areas of research, internships, field experience programs, and faculty development can benefit from working with the NDN. However, barriers that prevent use of the NDN programs exist in higher education institutions. Colleges are slow to accept change in their established programs. College faculty also may resent the emphasis on evaluation research and the necessity for coordination among political entities. (FG)

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Let's Stir Some New Ingredients Into the Cauldron

by C. M. Achilles

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Let's Stir Some New Ingredients Into the Cauldron*

Scene I. A Stagnant School of Pedagogy
(Pipe smoke and half-truths. Enter three Tenured Professors)
First Prof. When shall we three meet again in desultoriness, stodginess and superannuation?
Second Prof. When the trivia's done, when the backbiting's lost and won.
Third Prof. That will be ere tenure's won.
First Prof. Where the place?
Second Prof. Faculty Meeting, of Course.

"There is nothing new under the sun". (Ecclesiastes) Unfortunately, some professors I know believe this literally and live out their tenured sinecures acting the part. Fortunately, most don't believe that they learned everything when they received their doctorates; they still seek ways to learn new things.

Opportunities for "self renewal" of professors abound. They seem limited only by the ingenuity of the individual professor and that person's willingness to be insightful and creative. Although some may look at renewal only in terms of professional skills, there are copious chances to learn new things and become "energized" through approaching new avocations, creating new career options, or even tinkering with new technologies. However, for most of us, the primary need is for continuously cultivating skills conducive of improving our professorial roles. That is, to stay up-to-date and improve; for, if we look back we surely will find that someone is gaining on us. Additionally, many of us seek possibilities for professorial growth which will be legitimate, and provide potential for advancement and recognition, as well as renewal. Let's explore hitching our wagon to a star in the galaxy of federal programs.

In each state there is an unique vehicle for offering professors opportunities for creative approaches to self renewal. This vehicle is the federally funded National Diffusion Network (NDN), a process (since 1974) for disseminating

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exemplary programs, projects, and processes. Opportunities for working with and through the NDN are many and varied. This paper explores some possibilities for professorial self renewal by working with the NDN. It is not an exhaustive list; each professor and school should work out unique steps (and I'd like to know about them).

That the NDN is interested in working more closely with Institutions of Higher Education, (IHEs) was recognized formally when the NDN Division of the Department of Education established the NDN/IHE Advisory Committee with four responsibilities. Those responsibilities are:

1) To gather information about NDN and IHE interaction;
2) To prepare recommendations for plans of action to be undertaken by the NDN Division for purposes of bringing higher education into closer relationship to the NDN;
3) To act as advocate in the education community for expansion of IHE/NDN activity; and
4) To otherwise assist the NDN Division in establishing a stronger higher education relationship to the NDN.

Even before the NDN/IHE Advisory Committee completes its work (and it is currently engaging in some research to carry out its mission), it is possible to enumerate some cooperative NDN/IHE activities and procedures that have been used in the past, and also to identify some that seem logical for the future. However, before this is done, it may be useful to provide a brief description of the NDN, including the primary "actors" and some major activities and responsibilities of the NDN. For those of you who are thoroughly familiar with the NDN, I apologize for this digression; for the remainder, you will need this information so that you may make appropriate use of the NDN, and also find ways to help the NDN in its goal of improving education.

The National Diffusion Network (NDN) has primarily been oriented toward elementary and secondary education. At the risk of over simplification, the following is a synopsis of the NDN. The NDN started because there was a need to

share new programs that were working very well. These new programs that worked well had been developed at great cost of federal funds. A procedure was set up to evaluate and eventually "validate" the new programs. Once a program received validation--a type of "Good Housekeeping" seal of approval--it was eligible to compete for limited federal dissemination funds. Originally most projects were from Title III (ESEA) or Title IV-C of ESEA, as amended.

There are three principal "actors" in the NDN. First is the federal government office which oversees the NDN operation, evaluates proposals, checks on performance and things like that. Persons or groups who develop the exemplary programs that are validated are called Developer/Demonstrators (D/D). After the program is validated, a D/D disseminates information about the program, demonstrates it in depth, trains people who want to use the program, and engages in follow-up activities to assure that the program is used or "adopted" in appropriate fashion. The third actor is the State Facilitator, or SF. The SF, located in each state (usually in the state education agency), has coordination and brokering roles.

The following are some usual roles of SFs. These will vary depending on the state, the location of the SF office, and the individual style of each SF. (Individual SFs perform other roles; some of which will be discussed later).

1) Know the educators and the educational systems within the state.
2) Understand the educational needs both of the state and of individual school systems.
3) Know the programs available in the NDN. (Educational Programs That Work)
4) Match state needs with programs that could help alleviate those needs.
5) Coordinate visits by D/D's to each state, and obtain persons to attend the D/D sessions (awareness, training).
6) Work with the myriad of details surrounding adoption of exemplary programs.
7) Coordinate with other state and federal programs.
8) Help identify exemplary programs within the state and lead those through the validation process and into the NDN for sharing with others,

9) Assist in program evaluation activities.

10) Provide follow-up activities to assure that adoptions are taking place.

The process of validating exemplary programs needs mention. To review claims of program success, a review panel composed of members of the National Institute of Education and the former Office of Education was established and called the Joint Dissemination Review Panel (JDRP). Detailed procedures evolved for submission of evaluation data to the JDRP and for program review by the JDRP. Prior to JDRP, however, the potential exemplary program must be thoroughly evaluated; there should be approximately three years of program data which indicate the success of the program in achieveing its goals. Among other things, the JDRP attempts to answer the following questions.

1) Are the program's results believeable?
2) Do the data substantiate the claim(s) made by the program?
3) Are the results educationally significant?
4) Are the results statistically significant?
5) Is the program cost efficient/cost effective?
6) Has the evaluation been conducted in such a way to show that changes stem from program activities?

The JDRP panel reviews the data and program claims. A program that passes JDRP review becomes a Developer/Demonstrator, D/D, or an exemplary program. A program synopsis is prepared and publsihed in the annual NDN catalog, Educational Programs That Work, which is the list of programs that S/Fs use in securing adoptions.

As expressed earlier, most SFs are in state education agencies; only four S/Fs reside in IHEs (GA, TN, MN, NM). I contend that location of the S/F in an IHE provides unusual opportunities, flexibility, and potential in relation to the overall successful operation of the NDN. Also, location of the SF in

the IHE should provide unique opportunities for professorial renewal. However, everything is not always rosy. There are some persistent and potential pitfalls and problems. It is a land of promises and problems, with the promises (at least in my mind) prevailing.

Promises and Potentials: The good news!

NDN activities and functions can help higher education, and the higher education role can support the NDN. For example, higher education can be most useful to the NDN in such areas as research and evaluation. Some research might be large scale (perhaps done by one or more professors), but it is more probable that Master's and Doctoral students can use the NDN as a focus for their research requirements. (Benefits to the major professor are clear.) There are NDN mandates to evaluate--both NDN efforts and new projects for the JDRP. (Student and professor benefits). Internships can be served with the SF to give state, regional and national perspectives and insights into educational change, research and development. The fact that most SFs are in state education agencies offers a bridge between IHEs and state agencies--and many professors need this opportunity.

Of most interest personally is the relationship between the S/F and higher education's role in field service. The S/F activity provides a focus or coordination point for the field service of a College. For example, the SF can select key faculty and send them to receive training at the D/D site. Those faculty members can obtain the status of "trainers" in the NDN. They can then be used in an efficient and economic manner to provide training near the S/F site or throughout the state. This helps the professor keep skills sharp, and helps the NDN achieve training and the potential for follow-up activities at a cost far less than having D/Ds visit from the original site.

Work with the SF legitimates field service--there is a real way to get credit and recognition while helping local school systems improve. Just knowing about the NDN and its processes makes each professor in the field a "scout" to

spy and report any new programs that seem to be working. The NDN is constantly seeking new "programs that work" for dissemination.

The potential for self renewal of professors is great. Since these NDN programs have been evaluated and validated as ones that are effective, it is important that the professors know about them so that professors themselves can be more effective. Professors should begin to include information about these programs in their classes. With appropriate training, professors might even begin to include aspects of NDN programs in their own course syllabi, or as part of in-service sessions; some professors with the required training might offer NDN efforts for credit. These programs that are working "out there in the field" should be providing substance for IHE curriculum revision and new approaches to field service.

The Bad News! There Can Be Pitfalls and Problems....

Unfortunately, there are some problems in this potentially idyllic working relationship. They seem to be primarily problems of turf, tradition and temerity to change. Traditionally, higher education has not been extremely effective in fulfilling its service mission. Most "service" seems to consist of one-shot presentations--working relationships which have little promise for implementation or program change. The NDN strives for program change, and the S/F is evaluated on the extent of program change and adoption of "Educational Programs That Work" in the SF's service area. Further, higher education has often taken the stance that it knows what is best for the teacher or consumer. Today's teachers, however, seem to know what it is that they need. They respect other teachers who are doing innovative work. They are apt to listen to and take advice from their peers. Thus, the NDN's early orientation was on elementary and secondary education with very little attention to higher education. Using this format, the NDN has become the most successful promoter of change in education

today, and conducts training on a far larger scale than often is recognized. (In 1979-80, more than 107,000 persons received preservice or inservice training through the NDN; and almost 10,000 schools adopted NDN programs, according to recent data. Neill, S. B. "The National Diffusion Network," Kappan, 62, 10 (June, 1981) pp. 726-728).

In some ways, the NDN exemplifies a response by groups that traditionally relied on IHEs for advice--teachers, administrators, school boards--to the need for service and direction in education. With the rapid growth of the services provided by the NDN, IHEs are becoming less important in the delivery of educational services. And one way they are responding is by becoming more rigid, more withdrawn--as John Gardner (Self-Renewal) predicted, in many cases they are responding by becoming more closed. ("The last act of a dying organization is to rewrite the rule book," Gardner, J. "The Ever-renewing Society," Saturday Review, Jan. 5, 1963). This situation is a problem of tradition and turf--and it offers the professor an interesting place to become involved and get back into some leadership role.

Higher education often feels that teacher training is totally its field. Resentment builds when outside agencies attempt to work with inservice teachers, or even potential (preservice) teachers. It is difficult to coordinate NDN activities, needs, and programs with extant IHE programs, rules or regulations. This was very evident when an IHE in one state would not even discuss the appropriateness of awarding workshop credit for a program developed by nationally recognized experts at another IHE, even if faculty from the University department were invited to be part of the training faculty with a specific role of quality control. (If the uncooperative IHE staff were so good, why didn't they have an innovative program? Credit for 100 teachers was offered by a nearby IHE, with great loss of faith--and money--for the first IHE). Yet the teachers wanted the training and adopted the new program. But they could not get inservice credit in their preferred institution even though all normal rules for workshop credit had been met

by the program. This type of competition (or lack of cooperation--based on jealousy and hurt feelings) discourages the use of innovative program, and maintains the insularity of professors in their classrooms. Look at the lost possibilities for self-renewal: learning about new programs, working with experts from other IHEs, establishing new field relationships....

Since the S/F must maintain smoothe working relationships with several agencies (local schools, state education agency, higher education, federal government), there must be some attention given to preference and politics. Often professors have little regard for politics and even less concern for maintainance of cooperative working relationships. In addition, some faculty work better in the field service realm than others. Thus, it is imperative that the S/F select faculty carefully, and this causes other faculty to feel left out. Resentment may follow. This is especially true if consulting opportunities and funds become available through the SF contact. (And they do!)

Some University personnel eschew field or applied research as not theoretic or sophisticated enough. Since the NDN is primarily an application agency dealing in the adoption of proven practices, there are plenty of applied research opportunities available. Some of the research is in the form of evaluation research. This, unfortunately, is not preferred by some University personnel who, rather than recognizing coexisting needs, may offer obstacles. Since there are many opportunities for research and evaluation to be done cooperatively with the NDN, this stance hinders both the development of cooperative relationships and the delivery of the work--which easily would qualify as field service. (Another loss of self-renewal opportunity).

In Conclusion

There's a new kid on the block. It has survived the first fights and is now ready to lead the gang. It is anxious to forge new working relationships and is

offering a panoply of changes for innovative staff to become involved and use it in new ways. Opportunities abound for self-renewal through research, evaluation, training, field service, new cooperative efforts, new ways to work with state education agencies...the list is long. It has primarily been the NDN and elementary and secondary education. The IHEs have been invited in; the way is open to make this a three-way effort....

> When shall we three meet again in innovativeness, creativity and cooperation?
> When the planning's done; when its time to move ahead-